Physically and Mentally Handicapped Children

A Program For Their Adjustment

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PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN: A PROGRAM FOR THEIR ADJUSTMENT

WILLIAM J. ELLIS

This country suffers an enormous loss, both economic and social, from adult handicapped persons who through lack of proper training facilities have become, to a degree, dependent.[1] The potential problem of handicapped children threatens to be still more serious, due to the growing complexity of our daily life and the increasing demand of industry for the capable and alert. Among the handicapped in America today there are large numbers of children who are now or will later become social and economic liabilities unless society's attitude towards the physically and the mentally handicapped becomes wholly constructive.

A majority of physically and mentally handicapped children possess aptitudes and abilities which, when developed by proper social, academic, and vocational training can make these children socially and economically competent. To every child we owe the opportunity to develop to the maximum of his capacity. It is our particular duty to see that physically or mentally handicapped children have this opportunity, as a matter of right and fair play, in order to conserve human resources and to afford protection against dependency, pauperism, frustration, and delinquency. The waste of ability involved in our present laissez faire policy warrants our putting forth every effort in behalf of physically and mentally handicapped children, and demands that we supply such facilities that they may have a thorough preparation for community life. The

[1]The program presented herewith is the outgrowth of the work of the Committee on the Physically and Mentally Handicapped of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection, William J. Ellis, chairman. The following subcommittees were concerned with particular phases: The Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Josephine B. Timberlake, chairman; The Visually Handicapped (blind and partially seeing), Robert B. Irwin, chairman; The Crippled, Harry H. Howett, chairman; Internal Conditions, LeRoy Wilkes, chairman; Problems of Mental Health, Lawson G. Lowrey, chairman; Problems of Mental Deficiency, E. R. Johnstone, chairman; and the Vocational Adjustment of Physically and of Mentally Handicapped Children, Emil Frankel, research secretary.

TABLE V

Distribution by Sex

Boys	68 per cent
Girls	32 per cent

TABLE VI

Recommendations

Exclusion	25
State institution	12
Institutional class at 18th Avenue	22
Binet class	579
Special opportunity class	105
Slow section	691
Average section	387
Bright section	124
Vocational school	66
Continuation school	49
High school	4
Work	28
Special help	46
Special promotion	29
School for crippled	16
School for deaf	6
School for blind	2
Sight conservation	10
Speech class	6
Special schools for boys	5
Total	2112

most immediate objective in dealing with the handicapped children is the determination of their numbers, the discovery of the extent to which their needs are being met, and of the facilities necessary to meet their needs.

TEN MILLION HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

The large number of handicapped children in the United States indicates that the problem of the handicapped child is by no means a minor one. It is estimated that there are more than ten million children in the United States who are handicapped in the sense in which the term is here used; *i.e.,* children who are blind and partially seeing, deaf and hard of hearing, crippled, mentally deficient or disordered, or suffering from tuberculosis, parasitic, and cardiac diseases. A recent study to determine the number of atypical children requiring special class provisions in the school systems indicates that nearly eight per cent of the school population is mentally or physically handicapped.

These figures indicate that the problem of the handicapped child is of sufficient scope and interest to challenge the efforts of all intelligent, thinking persons. Although the movement in behalf of these children is progressing with an acceleration that is encouraging, the results are as yet far from satisfactory. This is due primarily to lack of scientific knowledge of the problem and to lack of adequate facilities for diagnosis, treatment, and training.

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee on the Physically and Mentally Handicapped of the White House Conference on Child Health and Protection formulated its recommendations for future activities on the following principle: Like every child, the child who may have some physical or mental handicap is to be regarded as a potential social asset and not as a liability. The handicapped child should be so guided that his aptitudes and abilities may be given the fullest possible development and that his life may be one of usefulness, success, and happiness.

The question of what we shall do to ameliorate the condition of the handicapped child is complicated and demands comprehensive research. It involves problems of the physical care of the child in schools, institutions, and in the home. It involves problems of his education, both general and vocational, and it involves also problems of social training and adjustment. The specific recommendations for curative and remedial treatment must be decided by the needs of the individual case and must be made in the light of the best scientific knowledge on the subject.

Perhaps the most important phase of a program for physically and mentally handicapped children is their education. The medical approach to the handicapped necessarily emphasizes their defects, but an educational approach to their problems begins with an inventory of their assets and builds upon these assets. This whole group of children is coming to be regarded as a stimulating challenge to educational methods instead of as a load to be carried with pessimistic fortitude.

In the education of handicapped children there must be a differentiation of methods and procedures to provide the special kind of education required by their special needs. In view of the relatively longer period of preparation for life's work necessary in the case of handicapped children and because of the somewhat restricted range of employment opportunity open to them, a restatement of the aim of education for them may seem advisable. In any such restatement emphasis should be given to the need for vocational training including preparation for professional, commercial, and industrial pursuits depending upon the degree and nature of the handicap, and to the adaptation of the curriculum, subject matter, and methods necessary to meet the aim.

The successful vocational adjustment of the handicapped child is the practical test of any program formulated for the child. The recommendations of the committees leading towards vocational adjustment are fourfold: guidance, training, placement, and follow-up.

PROPER GUIDANCE ESSENTIAL

The vocational guidance of the physically and mentally handicapped should be directed primarily by the aptitudes and abilities of the child, never losing sight of the handicaps that are involved. Skillful guidance should lead the child into those fields in which his handicap will not forbid equal competition with the normal or even into those in which it may be an asset. Such guidance must necessarily be given by well-trained and competent counselors who will direct the attention of the handicapped child away from what he cannot do to what he can do, specialize on strength rather than on weakness, give him an oportunity to participate in social activities while he is in school similar to those in which he will participate when he leaves school. Vocational training related definitely to local industrial, commercial, and professional opportunities is the best guarantee of a specific kind of employment. Such training can often be given in part within the public-school system and through the utilization of special schools. For a large number, however, training on the job must be arranged.

The employment of the physically and of the mentally handicapped child of working age would seem to proceed on three levels, viz.: (1) those who are able to work in regular industrial, commercial, or professional pursuits alongside of the normal worker and on an economic competitive basis, (2) those who are able to work only in a sheltered environment; e.g., a subsidized workshop, (3) those who are unable to travel to and from work and therefore must work in their homes, with materials and finished products delivered for them.

In developing these employment opportunities, industry becomes the focal point for the first level of employability. The program of providing fair opportunities for useful and profitable employment for the physically or mentally handicapped child of working age is based on the philosophy that any handicapped person who can, despite his handicap, perform a particular job as well as normal persons has a right to employment, and further-

more, if he can compete with the able-bodied, should be guaranteed employment. Industry is often open-minded, willing to be convinced of the feasibility of employing the handicapped. If it can be demonstrated to industry that a physically or mentally handicapped young person who has been adequately prepared can do as well as the normal worker, industry will not be slow in providing employment opportunities.

There are also many tasks in city, State, and Federal establishments that could be effectively performed by the physically and the mentally handicapped. A comprehensive survey of these positions should be made with a view of filling them as far as is practicable with the physically and the mentally handicapped.

The ultimate social and economic adjustment of the handicapped child depends to a large extent upon the attitude which he has towards his handicap, his associates, and the work he is to do. Social contacts are needed in order to enable the child to acquire favorable attitudes. Such contacts instill self-confidence, good morale, and a spirit of independence. There must be opportunity for physically or mentally handicapped children to have social contacts with normal children as well as with other handicapped persons.

PREVENTION

Amelioration of the condition of the handicapped child is of great importance. But even more important is the prevention of handicaps. Proper medical care of the individual cases can do much, and improvement in public-health work has a considerable value. Yet much remains to be learned before a large reduction in the total number of cases of physical and mental disabilities can be accomplished.

As a fundamental step in the formulation of any preventive program research must be carried on in many parts of the field. There is no handicapped group which is so well under control that it does not require research in practically every phase of the problem, especially in

the preventive aspect. It would seem important for the White House Conference to find a way to continue the study on facilities, employment, costs, accomplishments, and results, and the possibilities of prevention.

One of the most vital phases of a program for dealing with the handicapped is the development of a constructive attitude as to the debt and the opportunity we owe to physically and mentally handicapped children.

> "If we want civilization to march forward it will march not only on the feet of healthy children, but beside them, shoulder to shoulder, must go those others —those children we have called 'handicapped'—the lame ones, the blind, the deaf, and those sick in body and mind. All these children are ready to be enlisted in this moving army, ready to make their contribution to human progress; to bring what they have of intelligence, of capacity, of spiritual beauty. American civilization cannot ignore them.
>
> "The handicapped child has a right: (1) to as vigorous a body as human skill can give him, (2) to an education so adapted to his handicap that he can be economically independent and have the chance for the fullest life of which he is capable, (3) to be brought up and educated by those who understand the nature of the burden he has to bear and who consider it a privilege to help him bear it, (4) to grow up in a world which does not set him apart, which looks at him not with scorn or pity or ridicule but which welcomes him exactly as it welcomes every child, which offers him identical privileges and identical responsibilities, (5) to a life on which his handicap casts no shadow, but which is filled day by day with those things which make it worth while, with comradeship, love, work, play, laughter, and tears—a life in which these things bring continually increasing growth, richness, release of energies, joy in achievement."[2]

[2]From *Report of the Committee on the Handicapped*, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection.

RESEARCH PROJECTS AND METHODS IN EDUCATIONAL SOCIOLOGY

The following statements representing some of the important research projects and methods in the field of problem behavior, guidance, and mental hygiene in relation to education are presented here as a part of this special issue of THE JOURNAL *dealing with guidance. In anticipation of the present number, statements of the following projects were presented in the preceding issue (January): United States Office of Education Research, Behavior Research Fund of Chicago, Projects of the New York State Education Department, Research Set-Up of the Yale Clinic of Child Development. The limitations of space have prevented the inclusion of all important projects in these two issues. Additional statements, therefore, will be included from time to time in this department.*

IOWA CHILD WELFARE STATION RESEARCH[1]

I. Studies Completed and Published or Accepted for Publication

1. *Sex questions children ask.* By Katharine Wood Hattendorf. (Accepted for publication by *Parents' Magazine.*)
2. *A study of the questions of young children concerning sex:* A phase of an experimental approach to parent education. By Katharine Wood Hattendorf. (Accepted for publication in the *Journal of Social Psychology.*)
3. *Research in mental hygiene.* By Harold H. Anderson. *Childhood Education,* 1931, 7, 423-427.
4. *The development of mental health in a group of children:* An analysis of factors in purposeful activity. By Elizabeth Skelding Moore. University of Iowa Studies, *Studies in Child Welfare,* 1931, 4, No. 6.

II. Study Completed but Unpublished

The effectiveness of a home program for mothers in sex education. By Katharine Wood Hattendorf. August 1930.

[1]Statement furnished through the courtesy of Dr. George D. Stoddard, Director, Iowa Child Welfare Research Station, State University of Iowa, 1931.